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Old



Missions

THE OLD MISSIONS.

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THE OLD MISSIONS.

DREAMY and dutiful daughter of sunny Spain, with pulses unstirred by the restlessness of self-styled civilization, with neither regret for yesterday nor care for tomorrow, the Southern California of quarter of a century ago enjoyed its perennial siesta. To-day the most remarkable extant exemplar of American energy and progress, the scene of unparalleled development, it has passed forever from its quaint old dream. Between its sleepy Spanish past and its sleepless American present, few links remain. Practically the sole staunch survivors of those old days of romance are the venerable Missions; and they too are fast crumbling above the dust of a forgotten people. Of the numerous Missions and "stations," the minor ones are now mostly hopeless ruins; and even the most important are all sadly fallen to decay. In the following pages will be found the dates of the founding of the principal Missions of Southern California, with accurate photographs of the buildings as they now are. Some of the very finest illustrations are from paintings by that most successful of Mission artists, A. F. Harmer.

The method of founding the Missions was the same in all cases. A cross was set up; a booth of branches was built; the ground and the booth were consecrated with holy water.

and christened by the name of a saint; a mass was performed; the neighboring Indians were roused and summoned by the ringing of bells swung on limbs of trees; presents were given them to inspire them with trust, and thus a Mission was founded. Two Franciscan friars (never, at first more) were appointed to take charge of this cross and booth, and to win, baptize, convert and teach all the Indians accessible.

Later, as the dusky congregations grew, the possibility of better things, began; and under the direction of the Padres, the patient Indian converts raised the noble churches which were to stand long after the race that built them should have vanished from the earth.

THE SANTA BARBARA MISSION.

FOUNDED by Father Junipero Serra, December 4, 1786, the first church was hastily built, and in 1812 was nearly destroyed by an earthquake. Repairs were at once made and the Mission reached its present proportions in 1820. "Time and man have dealt kindly with the Mission. It is scarred here and there and some of its olden attributes of interest have been lost; but the building presents essentially the same appearance that it did nearly a century ago. The building is now presided over by a half-dozen Franciscans who wear the coarse robes of the order, and conduct regular services for the benefit of the few worshipers who cling to the church of their ancestors. * * The garden of the Mission possesses charming originality of design and aspect. It is filled with trees and flowering shrubs. Over the sides of the church and the high adobe walls grows the dark green ivy; far overhead rise the towers with their clanging bells; near by is the corridor with open arches and red-tiled roof."

II. II.

Here "Father Salvierderra" lived, from here went up through the beautiful Santa Clara valley to Camulos to hold service in the Señora's home, when he met "Ramona" walking through the thicket of wild mustard that grows like a tiny golden forest all about this region.



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THE MISSION OF SAN FERNANDO.

THE Mission of San Fernando Rey was founded in 1797, in honor of Ferdinand V King of Castile and Aragon. The beautiful old church is now a complete ruin. Formerly its buildings aggregated over a mile and a half in length. Helen Hunt said: "San Fernando is one of the places I desire to see twice." There are around the Mission some fine old olive trees, which still stand up against the storms of one hundred years. San Fernando was one of the Missions founded after the death of Father Junipero Serra, at a period of such great prosperity "that it became at once the common belief that his soul had passed directly into heaven, and that this great wave of concession was the result of his prayers." The Mission is twenty-one miles from the City of the Angels.



THE MISSION OF SAN JUAN.

“THE Mission of San Juan Capistrano was founded by Father Serra November 1, 1776. Here, part of the buildings are still habitable. Service is held regularly in one of the small chapels. The church is a splendid ruin. It was of stone, one hundred and fifty feet long by one hundred feet in width, with walls five feet thick, a dome eighty feet high, and a fine belfry of arches, in which four bells rang. It was thrown down by an earthquake in 1812. The peace, silence and beauty of the little hamlet of San Juan are brooded over and dominated by the grand gray ruin, lifting the whole scene into ineffable harmony. Wandering in room after room, court after court, through corridors with red-tiled roofs and hundreds of broad Roman arches, over fallen pillars, and through carved doorways, whose untrodden thresholds have sunk out of sight in summer grasses, one asks himself if he be indeed in America.”

H. H.

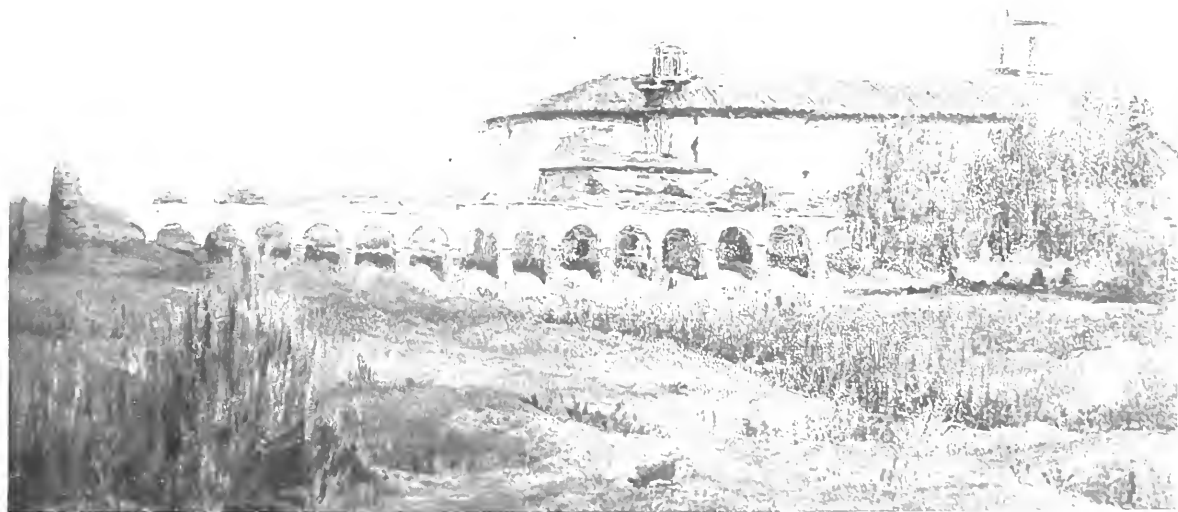




THE MISSION OF SAN LUIS REY.

THIS Mission was founded after the death of Serra, June 18, 1793. Its ruins are even finer than those of San Juan. It has a perfectly proportioned dome, over the chancel, beautiful groined arches on either hand and over the altar. Four broad pilasters on each side of the church are frescoed in a curious mixing of blues, light and dark, with reds and blacks which have faded and blended into a delicious tone. A byzantine pulpit hanging high on the wall and three old wooden statues in the niches are the only decorations left. Piles of dirt and rubbish fill the space in front of the altar and grass and weeds are growing in the corners. An old Mexican, a former servant of the Mission, has the ruin in charge and keeps the doors locked still, as if there were treasure to guard. As he totters along, literally holding his rags together, discoursing warmly of the splendors he recollects, he seems indeed a ghost from the old times."

H. H.



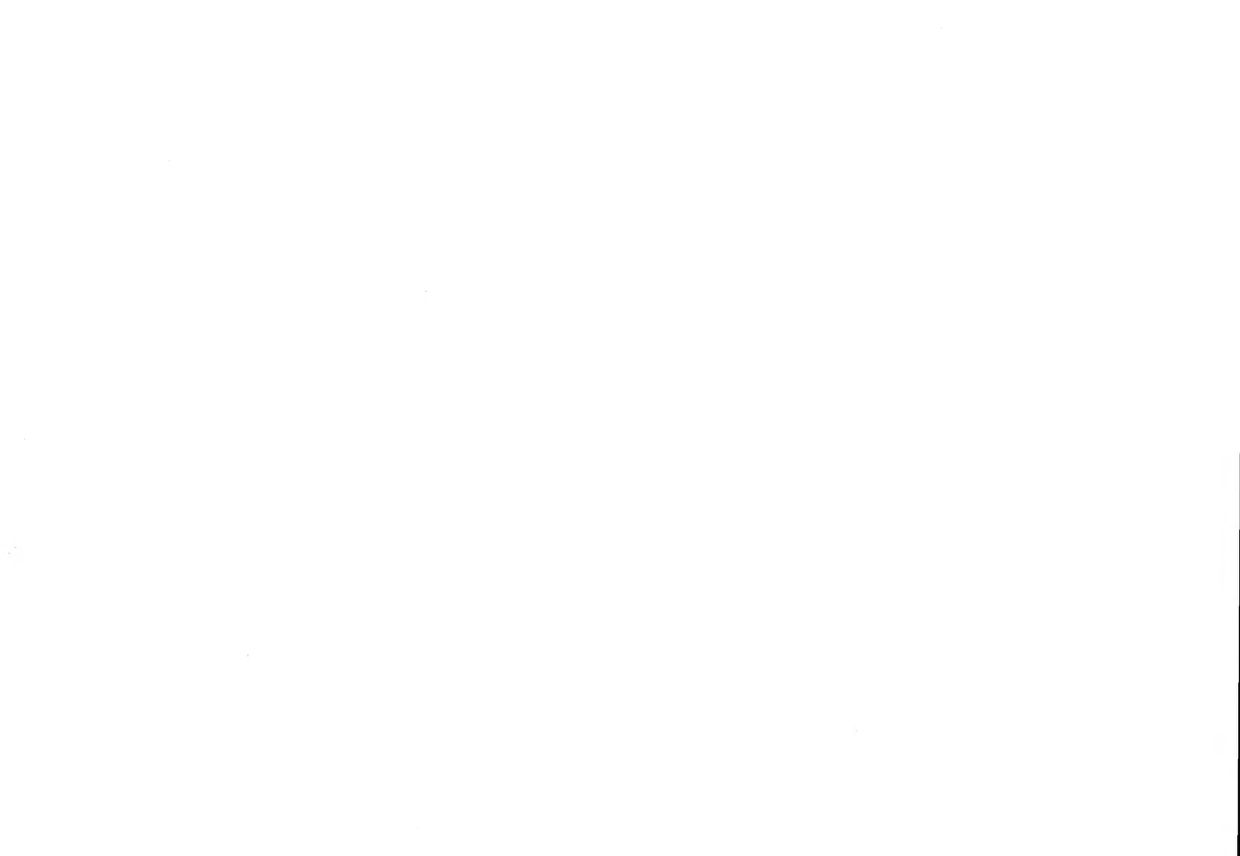
THE SAN DIEGO AND SAN GABRIEL MISSIONS.

ON the 16th of July, 1769, Father Junipero Serra and his little band of devotees landed in the harbor of San Diego. A cross was set up, mass was celebrated and the grand hymn of the "Veni Creator" was sung, with only the smoke of muskets for incense. Thus was laid the corner-stone of the civilization of California. This was the spot where that grand old Franciscan began his work; here he baptized his first Indian converts; here came in hasty flight, hunted and weary "Alessandro" and "Ramona," and were married by rough but kindly Padre Gaspara. Now the only traces left of Father Junipero's heroic labors are a pile of crumbling ruins, a few old olive trees and palms; in less than another century even these will be gone; returned into the keeping of that mother, the earth, who puts no head-stones at the most sacred of her graves.

The San Gabriel Mission was founded by Father Junipero Serra, September 8, 1771. Its site is about nine miles east of the City of the Angels. Its lands are now divided into ranchos and colony settlements. The massive old church is still standing in a fair state of preservation, and is used for the daily services of the San Gabriel parish. In its near neighborhood are a few crumbling adobe hovels, the only remains of the once splendid and opulent Mission.







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